

# Senior School Anti-discrimination Policy for Students

**Reviewed: August 2024**

**Next Review: August 2026**

**Reviewed by: Deputy Head (Student Engagement and Welfare)**

Drafted with student and staff input: AY 2022/23

## 1. Introduction and Key Principles

Experiencing discrimination can have a negative effect on the health and well-being of young people and of those around them. In some cases, young people's self-image can be seriously damaged by the prejudice they experience, resulting in feelings of shame, affecting their relationships with others and undermining their confidence and mental health.

At BGS, we want to achieve an inclusive culture where all members of the community feel a sense of belonging to the school. A sense of belonging is strongly correlated with a high sense of well-being and positive academic outcomes.

We aim to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- promote equal opportunities; and
- promote good relations between all people including those with different protected characteristics.

We aim to ensure that all students:

- Fully access the curriculum
- See themselves, their languages and their heritages reflected and valued in the curriculum
- Are encouraged to have high expectations and feel confident and proud to express their cultural identities

We are committed to:

- respecting and valuing differences
- meeting the diverse needs of our pupils
- preparing pupils for life in a diverse society

### What is discrimination?

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of people or groups of people because of certain characteristics they possess, for example, age, gender, race, sex, disability. These characteristics are referred to as protected characteristics. Discrimination can accumulate in different forms; direct and indirect discrimination. However, it is more difficult to identify indirect discrimination.

### Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic, such as sex or race. For example, you have the qualifications and experience necessary for the job but your application is turned down because you are 'too young' or 'too old'.

### Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination is when someone is unfairly put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristics. For example, a school makes a rule that doesn't allow students to wear dreadlocks or braids. This rule is more likely to affect people who are black, as they are more likely to wear their hair in those certain ways. The rule is putting black people at a disadvantage and therefore indirectly discriminating against them.

## **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 protects students in a school on the basis of 'protected characteristics'. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, sex, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 also makes it unlawful for a school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin. It also states that it is unlawful to discriminate because of the skin colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin of a person with whom the pupil is associated.

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of a perceived protected characteristic. So a teacher who treats a pupil less favourably because of their perceptions of the pupil's skin colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin will be discriminating on the grounds of race whether or not their perceptions are correct.

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

At BGS, we are committed to:

- Actively tackling discrimination
- Promoting equal opportunities
- Working with parents and guardians, and with the wider community, to tackle discrimination, and to follow and promote good practice
- Ensuring staff know their responsibilities and receive appropriate training/support
- Working towards delivering an inclusive curriculum and fostering a culture of belonging

Students are responsible for:

- Treating others with respect in accordance with our Values and Ethos;
- Reporting incidents if they perceive themselves to be the victim of discrimination, and students who witness incidents of discrimination have a responsibility to report this;
- Asking for help from staff in defusing a difficult situation. They should not retaliate..

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing the school if a parent is concerned that their child has experienced discrimination within the school community; they should talk to their child, listen, reassure, stay calm and speak with the school as soon as possible.
- Supporting the school's Anti-Racism policy and actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school.

Staff are responsible as follows:

Deputy Head (Student Engagement and Welfare) is responsible for:

- ensuring all stakeholders are aware of how to report racist incidents;
- investigating incidents of racism and providing appropriate re-education and/or sanctions to perpetrators of racist incidents along with the pastoral team;
- being the trained contact point for allegations of racism and providing timely and professional responses to complaints regarding racism
- Ensuring any barriers to students' feeling part of the community are tackled.
- Ensuring the victims of racism receive timely and appropriate support either in school or via external/partner agencies
- Making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these responsibilities

The Headmistress is responsible for:

- making sure this policy is readily available and that the governors, staff, students, and their parents and guardians know about it;
- making sure this policy and its procedures are followed;
- producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working,
- taking appropriate action in cases of racial harassment and racial discrimination.

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to and recording discriminatory incidents
- Being able to recognise and tackle discrimination and stereotyping
- Promoting equal opportunities
- Keeping up to date with the law on discrimination
- Engaging in training and learning opportunities
- Developing over time and delivering a curriculum that is accessible and inclusive to all learners (recognising the limits of the current exam curricula and lack of resources for some subjects)
- Recognising and valuing diversity
- Giving pupils the opportunity to explore questions of identity
- Providing all pupils with the chance to experience other cultures

### **3. Other relevant policies**

- Safeguarding & Child Protection
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Pastoral care policy
- E-safety policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Spiritual moral and cultural policy
- LGBTQ+ Policy
- Low Level Concerns
- Staff code of conduct

### **4. Actions to eliminate discrimination and promote diversity**

#### **Staff Training**

Plan and deliver a range of training and development opportunities for staff which promote professional learning and evidence informed initiatives. These include workshops delivered by external experts, staff meetings led by colleagues from the Diversity and Inclusion group and certified online training. Furthermore, all IB teachers engage in training linked to international mindedness.

#### **Curriculum review**

Review the curriculum periodically to develop diversity and inclusion through teaching and learning practices across the School. The Diversity and Inclusion curriculum sub-committee work regularly with staff to support departments in promoting a more inclusive curriculum, ensuring that a range of voices and perspectives are shared with students as part of subject/topic based narratives.

#### **Displays**

Ensure we have a visually inclusive environment. This can be accomplished through displays and posters which feature an ethnically diverse range of people. This creates an environment where community cohesion and a shared sense of belonging is visible within the school.

#### **PSHE**

Through PSHE, pupils have an understanding of the protected characteristics and how equality and diversity are promoted. The curriculum helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Through the Social, Moral, Spiritual & Cultural curriculum (SMSC) and the Relationships & Sex (RSE) curriculum- there is a statutory duty on schools to ensure pupils are equipped to deal with all aspects of modern life, including having an awareness and understanding of British law

#### **Cultural and community activities**

There is a widely published Diversity and Inclusion Calendar which maps out the events which will be celebrated and studied over the academic year

There is a prayer space available for student use

Triennial Culturefest: a community event to celebrate our diversity through exhibitions of food, crafts and dress

### **Audit of languages spoken other than English**

The EAL coordinator carries out an audit of languages spoken other than English through the lens of the EAL policy. This process is supported by the admissions team who carry out an initial language audit of individual students upon entry to the School.

### **Engaging with parents and carers**

This is a continual process and should feel a natural part of our school life. We aim to engage parents in what we are trying to achieve in the following ways:

- Social media posts
- Articles in the Edit and the Muse
- Curriculum Conversations (e.g. on Neurodiversity)
- Visiting speakers
- Highlighting alumnae achievements
- Cultural events that include parents (e.g. an annual Iftar, CultureFest)
- Inviting parents in to talk about their experiences
- Focus groups on occasion
- Regular references to our ethos and values at parent facing events (e.g. open days and welcome events)

### **Listening and Learning from the voice of pupils**

- Diversity and Inclusion Captain on the Girls' Leadership Group
- D&I Student voice group

## **5. Dealing with incidents involving discrimination**

Building an environment where stereotypes and prejudice-based views can be challenged constructively by everyone can help to create inclusive learning environments. This also helps to build the positive relationships and collective resilience needed to prevent bullying behaviour from occurring.

Unacceptable language and jokes around the school can create a climate of discrimination which both directly and indirectly excludes, threatens, hurts or humiliates young people.

Discriminatory language can be used without malice or understanding, but this does not mean that it has no impact on young people who hear it used in this way. Both young people and the wider school community may be seriously affected by these negative messages.

One example teachers may regularly come across is the use of song lyrics containing language which could be considered as a racial slur. In these cases, it's important that young people understand that whilst the song may be written by someone who arguably has the right to reclaim and use that language how they wish, it's inappropriate for them to repeat the lyrics in school (regardless of their intentions). Repeating this type of language in school is sometimes used as part of bullying behaviour, partly due to the fact that it's easy to deny any intention to offend.

It's important to challenge racist language in a way which avoids making young people feel defensive. Evidence suggests that feelings of defensiveness can actually worsen any underlying prejudiced attitudes. Restorative approaches which encourage reflection on the meaning and impact of what was said are likely to be more effective.

Examples of phrases which can help to address the use of discriminatory language could include:

- What happened?
- What were your thoughts at the time; were you aware that what you said sounds racist/sexist/homophobic etc, and could hurt someone?
- What have been your thoughts since; have you considered that this language is racist/sexist/homophobic etc?
- Who has been affected by what happened?

- How have they been affected?
- What do you need to happen now; do you need more information about discrimination and how it affects people?

In dealing with incidents where between students where discrimination is believed to be involved, we will follow the procedure in our anti-bullying policy:

- If a parent raises the concern via email, then a conversation will be arranged with the parent and an agreement to report back to them within an agreed timescale will be arranged. When setting a timescale for investigating a bullying complaint, staff need to be realistic and consider other commitments within school.
- If a child raises a concern, preliminary investigations will occur and then the parent will be contacted. The concern raised will be investigated and this will involve interviewing both the alleged perpetrator and the victim, as well as any students including bystanders and staff deemed relevant to the concern.

Written statements are often asked for. We make it clear to the victim that retaliation is not appropriate, and to the perpetrator that her behaviour is unacceptable and has caused distress. Every effort is made to resolve the problem through counselling of both parties, where an understanding of the perpetrator's motivation should be sought and addressed. The perpetrator should be helped to face up to and accept responsibility for the harm they have caused. The victim will also be supported, for example, through mentoring or touching base with a trusted adult. The situation will continue to be monitored over a period of time.

At this stage, it is usual for the parents of all parties to be informed of what has happened, and how it has been dealt with. Details of any sanctions given to students will not be shared. It is vital that everything that happens is carefully recorded by the member of staff dealing with the incident in a clear, factual way as documents to be stored in the files of the perpetrator and victim. Conversations with parents should also be noted and added to the students' files.

It is vital to keep parents informed of the action being taken. It can be frustrating or upsetting for a parent to wait by the phone for a promised call which never comes or to have emails ignored. This often leads to the problem escalating.

If the discriminatory behaviour continues, then further sanctions will follow.

### **Who can students go to when reporting concerns**

A student can speak with any trusted adult in the school. This may be their form tutor/class teacher, HoY, Pastoral Officer, any of their teachers or anyone they work with through the staff D&I Group. This applies whether they have concerns about a student or a teacher. If they want to report a serious concern about a teacher, then they can contact the Head's PA ([collette.willis@bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk](mailto:collette.willis@bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk)) Another alternative for students is to use the anonymous reporting tool, Toot Toot. Student concerns will be taken very seriously, but students should note that they might not know the outcome of any investigation as these are confidential, both for teachers and students.

### **Incidents involving a member of staff**

Incidents involving a member of staff showing discriminatory behaviour to students should be reported as a low level concern either by the member of staff making the allegation or by the person the student has reported their concerns to.

Incidents between members of staff should be reported directly to the Headmistress and will follow the usual HR processes.

The Headmistress may instruct members of the Senior Leadership Team, potentially in conjunction with the line manager of the staff member concerned (or other key member of staff linked to the concern), to investigate the low level concern. This may involve speaking with witnesses (staff members or students), reading emails or other similar investigations. The Head will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking, where possible, with the person who raised the concern, to the individual involved and to any witnesses.

If the investigation confirms the occurrence of the low level concern, these are some of the next steps that may be taken depending on the circumstances:

- the staff member concerned may be called for a meeting with the Headmistress or another member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss the low level concern raised;
- If the person reporting wishes to remain anonymous, those wishes will be respected as far as possible.
- the Headmistress may write a letter outlining the concerns and where standards have fallen below the expectations set out in the Staff Code of Conduct or the Safeguarding Policy, to be kept on the staff member's HR file;
- a support plan may be put in place to help the staff member concerned meet our professional expectations. This may involve their line manager and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- other measures may be put in place as deemed appropriate by the Headmistress;
- If this is not the first low level concern, we may begin the formal process under the Disciplinary Policy

Please see Appendix A for the flow chart for reporting.

## **6. Support for Students**

The support we might put in place for students experiencing discriminatory behaviour can include the following:

- Follow up conversations with supportive staff
- Reassurance that the issue will be looked into appropriately
- Making students feel heard when talking to pastoral staff
- Restorative conversations
- Reassurance that there has been a consequence for a student where appropriate (but no details are given)
- Support from outside groups or mentors

## **7. How we record discriminatory incidents**

Accurate records are kept of any incident within the school. Witness statements and outcomes of investigations are kept on a student's iSams record. Incidents concerning teachers are kept on their HR files. Incidents involving discrimination are coded so we are able to track any trends. The Headmistress and the Deputy Head Student Engagement and Welfare review records termly.

## **8. Importance of Education**

Both for staff and students it is crucial as a school that we provide sufficient education and training on how to ensure everyone is treated fairly. All stakeholders in school must be able to identify racism, cultural and other prejudices or unconscious bias in order for us as a community to respond, challenge and prevent discrimination of all forms.

Where an incident has occurred, we will ensure that further education is given to the person who has exhibited discriminatory behaviour, so that the behaviour is not repeated. Where incidents are caused by a lack of understanding the student(s) will be directed to reading / an empathy task / reflecting on the harm caused / exploring where their own prejudices come from. Where the incident stems from a desire to cause harm / distress / or is a repeated incident of racism the student(s) involved will be sanctioned in line with the school's anti-bullying and positive behaviour policies.

A similar approach will be taken with any staff displaying discriminatory behaviour.

## **9. Links**

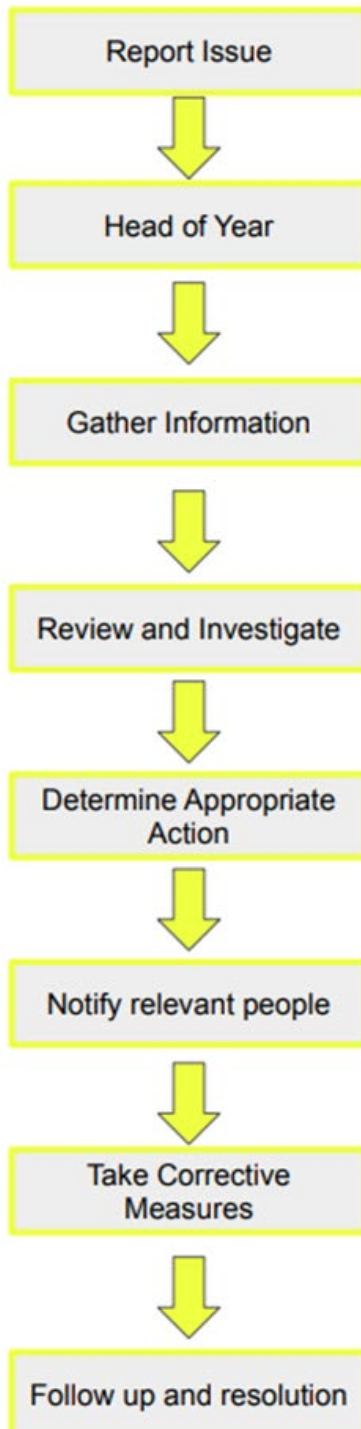
Framework for developing an antiracist approach [Framework for developing an anti-racist approach](#)  
Equality - everyone's business [An Anti-racism Toolkit for Schools and Education Settings](#)  
[your rights: How you can be discriminated against - GOV.UK](#)  
[Overview of discrimination in education - Citizens Advice](#)

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

The overall effectiveness of the anti-discrimination policy will be subject to consideration in daily school life; as part of the school development plan, staff meetings, SLT meetings, governors meetings, assemblies and class discussions and student voice surveys.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if necessary by the Deputy Head(Student Engagement and Welfare)

## Reporting Discrimination Flow Chart



Students or parents report the issue of discrimination (child on child or teacher) to the school by following the reporting procedure. This can be directly to the Head of Year or to a form tutor or trusted member of staff (who will inform the HoY). Students can also use Toot Toot.

The report is initially received by the Head of Year, who acts as the first point of contact and will explain the process to the parents giving an idea of timescale. This may need to be flexible depending on complexity.

The Head of Year or the Deputy Head (Student Engagement and Welfare) gathers all relevant information and details about the incident. If the allegation is against a teacher, the Head will instruct a member of the SLT to investigate. Investigations do take time to be completed properly.

The gathered information is reviewed and investigated by the Deputy Head (Student Engagement and Welfare) or the Head to determine the validity of the report. All records are kept on iSAMS and My Concern.

Based on the investigation, the Head or Deputy Head (Student Engagement and Welfare) or Head of Sixth Form determine the appropriate course of action.

All key parties are kept informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation as much as is appropriate.

Corrective measures are taken by the school which may include sanctions, restorative conversations, counselling, or interventions. Note that if any sanctions are brought these will not be shared with the student making the report or their parents. This does not mean their concerns have not been taken seriously, but it is not appropriate to share actions relating to another student or member of staff.

The school follows up on the issue and ensures its resolution, aiming to prevent any future incidents of discrimination.

